or something able to view or receive information from the object (destination) selected by the network (Col. 4 lines 57-60). Hence, Sullivan is directed to selecting a destination to receive information, where the destination is based upon feedback from the recipients that is used to "rate" the object. (Col. 5, lines 10-13). For instance, as shown in figure 5 (one embodiment), information sources (here, e-mail sources) are connected to recipients of email (the destination) (generally described at Col. 9, lines 18-47). Attributes of the information contained by the information sources (particular e-mail messages) are input into the neural network. The output of the neural network is the object (the destination) to receive the information based upon feedback from the recipients (Col. 9, lines 46-50). Sullivan thus teaches a method of deciding what information is to be delivered to particular recipients based upon recipient preferences. See Col. 2, lines 10-30 (objects of the invention).

Applicant's invention is not directed to "filtering" information to be received (that is, selecting the location (site) where information is to be sent), but rather to selecting a particular computer (source of data) to respond to a request for that particular data request. The inventive method employs a neural network to "choose" a particular computer to fulfill a request for data not based upon the recipient' preferences, but based upon the number of previous requests for a data set. Applicant's claim 1 is a method for assigning one computer from a series of computers to service a request for data, where the method includes receiving a request for data, inputting into a neural network an input vector having entries that are dependent upon the prior requests for the requested data over a predetermined time period, and selecting an output node that minimizes a predetermined metric, where the output node is associated with a particular computer.

Sullivan does select a computer to service (answer or address) a request, Sullivan teaches selecting the recipient to receive a data set. Sullivan determines who will receive a particular item of information - the applicant's invention addressed, not to who is to receive, but which computer will answer the data request (service the data request). Independent claims 1, 10, 14 and 15 require "selecting a computer assignment associated with a selected one of said output nodes to service said data request."

Sullivan does not compare the output of each output node to that of other output nodes to determine which information recipient is better suited to receive certain information. In contrast, the Sullivan et al. system has users provide feedback for *each* output node such that the learning network may determine the error from an expected output and then learn accordingly. Each information recipient determines what classes of information he receives from any particular source and the network adapts to those preferences such that after each subsequent epoch, the error at the information recipient becomes smaller and smaller. In Applicant's system, the information recipients, i.e., the servers, must compete with each other to determine which output node is best suited to receive the information (i.e., data request).

Further, the Sullivan system and method utilizes user feedback to provide learning within the network. Sullivan discloses several back propagation and cascade correlation algorithms that could be used, and suggests that any learning could be used. However, Sullivan does not disclose or discuss the use of competitive learning algorithms like those disclosed in the Applicants' application. A winner-takes-all strategy or even neighborhood learning, like the Kohonen modification algorithm used in Applicant's invention, will not implement the disclosure of Sullivan.

Hence, Sullivan does not anticipate Applicants' independent claims 1, 10, 14 and 15, and hence, cannot anticipate any depended claims.

CONCLUSION

Applicant believes the claims are in order for allowance and requests that all claims pass to issuance.

Respectfully submitted,

DATE: _____

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